

# ***Introduction***

WebContentRx.com, the business, was formed to meet the growing need for services related to business communications and to make business-related Web sites more effective. So to meet that need:

- We design, develop, and host Web sites.
- We research and write keyword-laden Web content.
- We Search Engine Optimize the content and the Web page(s) that carry the content.
- We do e-mail marketing.
- We provide our clients with digital photography.
- We write and disseminate media releases.
- Our customer service is fantastic and there is never a charge to chat. We even buy the coffee.

We treat your Web site as we would an employee, with a job to do, a cost to the company, and a benefit to the company. Like any other employee, the site must do its job—else you're throwing your money away.

The Web is no longer the province of scientists, engineers, and those with technical skills. Now the Web is where we shop, hang out, play, buy, sell, and get to know each other. The Web has changed and the needs of those who use the Web have changed. We aim to meet those needs.

In 2009, the quality of the content that businesses and people put on the Web is now recognized as being important. No longer is just cutting and pasting lots and lots of text (fluff) onto a Web site taken as a substitute for substantive content.

From now on content will remain important to the Web as long as the Web is important to people. As an information retrieval and delivery tool,

the Web is without equal. The true value, the genius, the very capability of the electronic world is that it is adaptable and able to incorporate new and old ideas. Old ideas? E-mail, the true killer application, was invented in 1971. The Web did not come along until 1980. E-mail fit right in.

So, content and the quality of content have arrived and will remain important for the future, certainly for the life of the Web and then on whatever technology replaces it.

We believe that no discussion of content is complete without including Web code, design, and keywords. To deliver high-quality content that conveys a message and provides the necessary information for search engines is just doing the job and part of the services that anyone paying for a Web site has every right to expect. What's the point of placing great content on the Web if no one can find it? So, a knowledge of Web development will aid you as a writer, make the Web master's job easier, and make the finished product richer. Further, knowing something about the technical side will enhance your value as a wordsmith and increase your income, but, be advised, we will not attempt to make you a Web master. While we clearly include technical material there is no attempt to make you a geek. For those who have technical skills and want to add writing to your resume, you will find the technical material will enhance your skills. What is contained here concerns the writer. It will be a tremendous asset to you personally, professionally, and economically.

So, whether you are a Web master, a technical writer, work in industry, write eBay ads, or just want to put good stuff on your site, we planned and wrote this book for you.

## **Get Read or Get Lost— Your Content Decides**

“Put it to them briefly, so they will read it; clearly, so they will appreciate it; picturesquely, so they will remember it; and, above all, accurately, **1** so they will be guided by its light.”

—Joseph Pulitzer

On December 24, 1877, Thomas Edison patented the phonograph. No one ever bought a phonograph. No one ever bought a radio. No one ever bought a television. No one ever bought a video cassette recorder (VCR), a compact disk (CD), or a digital video disk (DVD). No. What they bought was a content delivery system. We start by speaking of Edison because he began the electric march into the future. We could have begun with Gutenberg and the printing press because, you see, it is not the technology that people want, but the content that the technology delivers. It is the content that is important, that is sought, that is bought and paid for.

The Web is no different from a printing press, or a phonograph, or a DVD, or whatever *technology* comes next. What is important is the content that the technology delivers. It is the content that people pay to hear, see, or interact with. It is the content that people want. It is the content that your customers will pay you to create. It is the content that pays for the technology that delivers it.

Think about audio content. It was played live, and only live, for centuries. Then it was recorded. While technology after technology that delivered music has gone obsolete, the music endures. Remember eight-track tape? Probably not; it's obsolete. Remember vinyl albums and 45 RPM records? They're obsolete too, while recorded music is more successful than ever. Just consider the iPod, and the software that runs on computers to play music. The music, the content, is alive and well. While the technology changes, the music endures.

Throughout this book there is one overriding theme. It is that content is important. There are countless examples of content making its way down the ages. From cave drawings, to painted scenes in the pyramids, to perhaps the most successful content delivery system of all time: books. Don't be taken in by the sound of lasers, bells, and electronics as your mouse alights on a link. Don't be fooled by bright flashing colors that supposedly get attention and make you spend money. The messenger is not the message.

The *message* is the message—and the message is the content.

It was always about content and it will always be about content. Content is king. Even when you hear, and read, that content is not king. That is a ruse; read what they have to say. Those who say content is not king quickly add that the user, the reader, is king. In that, your majesty, there is no doubt. Content is the only thing that matters. If you doubt that think of:

- The Bhagavad Gita
- The Bible
- The plays of Shakespeare
- The prophecies of Nostradamus
- The *Art of War*, by Sun Tsu
- The Constitution of the United States
- The Bill of Rights
- Countless other texts that have withstood the test of time

The technology that the content resides on has changed and will continue to change. The content itself will not. It's not the Web that is important; it is the content that the Web delivers. What makes the Web superior are the Internet services that run on it, its ability for interactivity, e-mail, file transfer protocol (FTP), the vast array of audio and video capability, the programming languages and scripting tools that allow for the plethora of material available to people everywhere, and, of course, hypertext links. The Web allows unparalleled communication and the ability to move data quickly and easily. This and high-speed connectivity make the Web a superior environment for the delivery of content. On that, we would never disagree. However, those services are icing on the cake, not the cake itself. Sure, on the Web, you can shop in real time, instant message, and download everything from software to songs, but how did you do those things before the Web existed? You shopped, got information, and listened to music. Is the Web a major step forward? Of

course, but the Web also brings the dark side of human experience right into your home, right into your mind, often unbidden. That too, is content, but content that we do not necessarily want. The World Wide Web is quite literally like the Wild West. There are good guys, bad guys, cops and robbers, and just plain folks working and living and wanting nothing more than to raise their children in a safe place. And it is the content running on the Web that helps and hinders all those things. Whether you think it is good content, bad content, protected speech, or vile hate, it's the content that is good or bad.

And, having said all that, as far as we are concerned, content is text because text is what search engines find at least for now and the foreseeable future.

### ***The Web: What It Is and What It's Not***

The Web is an information retrieval system. Sure, of course. So what? The Web is not the message. It is the messenger; the Web brings the message. Don't be deceived by all the technological blinking lights, bells, whistles, and technical fanfare. Look close; look hard; see beyond it. Once a teacher of mine told us that you see with the mind, not with your eyes. See what is there; see the message. Is it the message you want to convey? Don't be impressed by all that color and hoop-la. If you do not make sure the user receives the intended message, you're finished. And all the money spent on your site—gone. And your competition wins. No, that's not right. They did not win. You were never serious competition because your message was so bad. You simply lost. Never, ever, be blinded by all that technology. See the message. If you don't, won't, or can't, then *you* are who *I* want to compete with because I won't give you the chance to do things twice.

### ***Search Engines Find Content***

Never in human history has so much content been accessible by products that exist only to find something. If you think that because your favorite search engine cannot locate what you are looking for means that it does not exist, you are wrong—so very, very wrong. A search engine sends its robots to scan the Web and bring back data on what is found and the Web address where it was found. No search engine searches the entire World Wide Web when you issue a query. Many people think that a search engine actually does that. Not so. Your query searches only the data available to the search engine in its data

warehouse. Keep that in mind next time you can't find what you know is out there. That is why using more than one search engine is a good idea. They do contain different information in their data warehouses. When search engines fail, you hit the books in the library, because not everything is on the Web. Good libraries can't be beat. Research librarians are worth their weight in gold when you need difficult to find information.

There is another reason to be aware of this. You can easily and inexpensively use Google, and other search engines, to provide site search capability for those who visit your Web site. We will talk more about that later. Keep in mind that, for any search engine to find material on your site, that material must have been scanned and its location must exist in the search engine's data warehouse. When you add content to your site, that data is not in the data warehouse until your site, and the new data it contains, are scanned and the information on what it is and where it is gets back and updates the search engine's data warehouse. So be advised that just because you add content to a Web site does not mean that it is instantly able to be found by search engines. It does not work that way.

Here is a feature you may be able to use. Have you ever needed to find something on a Web site that you know is there, but can't find it? That happens all too often. What to do? Use Google to search the site for you. To access this feature select Advanced Search from Google's main page. Many search engines offer this feature besides Google. It is a superb tool for finding specific material on huge sites. (Note: Because of the technical differences between databases and directories, we opted for the term *data warehouse(s)* to make the writing and reading easier.)

It is the ability of search engines to index, retrieve, and create hypertext links to content that makes the Web as we know it possible. Can you imagine the Web without search engines? It would be like looking for a leaf in a forest—chaos. The Web would be a morass of disorganized data. Rather than the superb resource that we know and love, the Web would be worthless without search engines because you could not find anything.

While it is true that video, audio, and images can be thought of as content, search engines cannot find them directly, or index their content. It is the associated text that search engines find, read, record, and work with. For the foreseeable future, search engines will remain text-based hunter-gatherers wandering the Web following the links they find. If you think you can find music without a title to search for, or the words to a song, try entering a few musical notes and

see how far you get. The same goes for pictures. You can input text and have the search engine find a picture related to that text, but you can't input a picture and have a search engine look for a similar or different picture. Not yet anyway. When looking for photographs by Brassai or Ansel Adams, or for the Wright Brothers' first airplane, you execute a text-based query. For the foreseeable future, and for our purposes, content is text, words, sentences, paragraphs, headings, <title>, <h1>, <h2> tags, and META data, and keywords. While this may not be wholly satisfying, it is a workable definition.

## **Podcasting and Flash Animation**

Podcasting is only increasing in importance and will likely live for a long time or give birth to its replacement. Either way, it is well worth discussing. Podcasts are in the same boat as images and all the rest. When you search for a podcast you are conducting a text-based query and will find text information associated with the podcast. This only highlights the importance of the words that you use to title or describe your podcast(s).

Flash animation is the Adobe product used to make those gorgeous effects often seen at the opening of Web sites. We do not recommend relying on Flash, because the files that produce it are not readable by search engines. Flash is fine if it solves a problem, makes a point, or shows users something of value. No argument there, but search engines will not find your Flash because they simply can't read it. That is why we do not recommend opening pages that consist of Flash animation only.

Look at the opening of your Web site. Is it loaded with useless Flash? Flash is useless when it conveys no meaning or contributes no added value to the user. Do you require users to watch the Flash or do you give them a link to end the Flash and enter your site? If you have a link to end the Flash and enter your site, there's a message there. Flash is not content. The designers of the site know that many users will leave rather than wait for the Flash to end. However, Flash animation can be a terrific asset to a site when used properly. For an example of the beauty that Flash can add to a Web site, see *www.sirebelfilms.com*, created by Mark Coleman. What we are saying is don't use Flash for your entire opening page. As an enhancement, fine. To make the site a thing of beauty, fine. We have no problem with that.

While we are talking about what detracts from a site, let's mention navigational links that are created with javascript. They look great, can be animated,

and truly are gorgeous. The problem is that javascript links are not readable by search engines because they don't contain words. For that reason we do not recommend javascript links.

Web pages that are nothing more than a large graphic file are a bad idea because while you may see text on screen there is no search-engine-readable text. As with any graphic file, it is not search-engine-readable because the text is only a picture or graphic of text, not actually words and letters. How can you determine if a site is built this way? At the top of your browser window in your toolbar, you will see the words File, Edit, View, and others. Select and click on View. Look for Source or View Source and click on it. Now you are seeing the nuts and bolts that create what is viewed onscreen. The words you see in the browser should be in the source file.

For these reasons we say that, while sites can and do contain all manner of movies, graphics, directions, maps, buttons, blinking lights, audio, sounds, or songs we, in this book, are only concerned with text because text is what allows search engines to find your site. When you search for a video, a picture, or a song, you are finding the text—the description of it—written in letters and numbers. That needs to be clear.

### **When You Do Not Want to Be Found by Everyone**

This seems like an odd thing to place at the beginning of a book on Web content, but it is a necessary consideration because all Web sites have goals. In the commercial world, you want potential customers to contact you and buy your products, don't you? No, not always. Let's imagine that your client is a pizza restaurant with a large take-out and delivery business. You likely know of restaurants like this. Our pizza shop wants telephone calls and business from people in the geographic area that it serves. Pizza shops have an operating area for their delivery people and for customers who will drive to eat there. Customers from within this area are who our pizza shop wants phone calls from. Calls from outside the operating area take up employee time, contribute nothing, and keep bona fide business from getting through. So you see, it is in the pizza shop's best interest to prominently list what town and state the restaurant is located in and the towns to which it delivers. Including the local telephone number, with area code, at the top of the opening Web page goes a long way to avoid calls from far away. Keep in mind that many town names are duplicated in other states and, when you search for pizza in



your town, no search engine will ask you what state you are located in. Search engines are not that smart. Not yet anyway.

Consider a Web site as an employee. It has a job to do. In this case, it is to garner business calls that our pizza shop can fulfill. The Web site's job is to promote calls from within your customer area and eliminate calls from outside that area. So, when we say that the job of Web content is to drive business to you, that's right and wrong. The entire story is this: to drive business to you that you can service and make money from. And to keep you from spending time and money on calls with which you cannot do business. So, if you are a business that caters to local, state, or regional customers, make that clear on your opening page.

Here is an example of unwanted contact. The town of Coventry, Connecticut, used to receive e-mail from people in Coventry, England. This was a time-waster for everyone. It took up the time of the Coventry, Connecticut, town employees and wasted the time of the people in Coventry, England. Online, with e-mail, the people who contact you can be from anywhere in the world. Take steps to ensure that all contact is quality contact, so that this sort of thing does not happen to your clients. Never hesitate to make absolutely clear where you are located and the business area that you serve.

## **What You Want Content to Do**

The goal of your content is identical to the goal of the Web site. No surprise there. For a commercial site the goal is to generate sales. This is done by a phone call, an online store, or, for high-end merchandise, a personal visit to a showroom, dealer, or brick-and-mortar store. To go along with this, the site must support the ease of selling its product. Does the site allow for purchase by credit card? How about PayPal? Can users send you a check? Checks are a bad idea when dealing with the online world, but people still use them. A credit card is far more secure. Also don't forget e-mail and the telephone. Do you have provision for an 800 or 888 number? Even though this is becoming less important with the advent of cell phones, you may want to consider it. The question is how much business comes your way via the phone. With e-mail, you can easily install an automated response e-mailer that sends back an e-mail in seconds. That's fine, but people know that it's automated. E-mail can be a problem if you are not geared up to handle it. It can make you an e-mail slave. Adequate staff is needed to handle timely responses. For that reason we never recommend the use of e-mail unless the client is comfortable with

the technology and has the personnel, hardware, and connectivity to handle the traffic. If your client uses the telephone for customer contact now, then simply put their phone number prominently on the top of the opening page. On the contact us page, place the client's snail-mail address and fax number. While we are talking about a fax number, you can suggest that the client use an e-mail/fax service where all faxes arrive in the client's e-mail folder. A fax can be sent from a word processor. This will save your client a fax machine and the telephone line that it requires and will result in a nice reduction in their yearly telephone bill and kudos for you. While there is a monthly fee for the fax service it is less than a dedicated phone line as this is written. This is great for political campaigns where political rivals will send a continuous fax to use up all your paper and all your toner, and maybe destroy your fax machine as well, but that's another story.

### **Writing for the Client**

Writing to be successful means writing content that is targeted to the needs of your client. Before you even begin to write you need to:

- ▶ Know the client (or who is paying for it).
- ▶ Know what the content is supposed to do. Will it be used on a political Web site or will it be product description? You must know what the content's job is.
- ▶ Know how long the content is slated to live. Will it be replaced weekly, daily, monthly, or never? Never is the most likely as people seem to have an aversion to keeping material current. This needs to be kept in mind.
- ▶ Meet with the client personally. This is very important to the quality of the content you will be writing. You need to know if the company is 80 or 100 years old, is a good neighbor in its town, and considers itself a family-oriented company that serves the community. Or is the company a brand-new startup: Brash, brilliant, not conservative, stylish, and composed of young people. The style of your writing must reflect that of the client for whom you are writing.
- ▶ Avoid allowing the Webmaster getting between you and the client. Tell the Webmaster that you want to be involved in any meetings that will discuss content, the needs of the client, or the purpose of the site. From personal experience, we can tell you that being involved in meetings is very productive. Take your time when in a meeting with the client and

listen to the words that people use. You will find the key to building your content. In one meeting, after a couple of hours, we were told that “we are a family-related business.” Those words told us who we were dealing with and guided our material. Always make an attempt to meet the client. It’s important when you meet the client to be sure that you present an agreeable, non-judgmental business facade because, if the client does not like you, they won’t like your writing. Keeping the sympathy of those for whom you write is smart. You are not manipulating anyone. You are keeping the sympathy of the people who pay you, and that is always a smart thing to do.

- ▶ Ask specific questions about who the client’s customers are because they are the people who will be reading your content. Develop a general customer and give this person a name. Call him Joe or Josephine Customer if you have to. For ease of writing, we will refer to Joe or Josephine simply as Joe and assume that our phantom customer is male.
  - ▶ How old is Joe?
  - ▶ Where does he live?
  - ▶ Does he own a home?
  - ▶ Is Joe divorced?
  - ▶ Is Joe married?
  - ▶ Does Joe have children?
  - ▶ How much money does Joe make?
  - ▶ What’s Joe’s educational level? Be prepared for Joe’s educational level to run from high school dropout to PhD. This will be the case for any client that deals with people living over a wide geographic area. Our pizza shop is an example, as are fuel oil companies and movie theaters. In this case you write for the lowest education level.
  - ▶ Has Joe lived here all of his life? Or did Joe move here from afar?
  - ▶ Is Joe a military person?
  - ▶ What’s important to Joe?
    - ◊ Price?
    - ◊ Service?

- ❖ Ease of ordering?
- ❖ Home delivery?
- ❖ Fuel economy?
- ❖ An environmentally friendly product?
- ❖ Consistency of product?
- ❖ Availability of product?
- ❖ Quality of product? While this seems a strange thing to consider, there are items for which we are unconcerned with quality. For example: cheap ballpoint pens, give away products that are made to only look expensive, or gag gifts of little or no value beyond a laugh when given.

Now that you know something about the client and the customer the user is no longer anonymous.

- Look at the design that your Webmaster has roughed out and plan your content accordingly. If you have 30 percent of the onscreen “real estate” taken up with photos, navigation, headings, and a phone number, you need to structure your words accordingly. Don’t send the Webmaster 2,000 words, because there is no place to put them all. Do, however, be prepared to cut or add to your words should the design change. And change is a real possibility. Even after the design has been accepted. It has happened to us and will happen to you.
- Do your keyword research. You will need to have keywords before you begin writing because the keywords will need to be included in headings, the body of the text, the META data, and the title tags that you will be writing. If you have not been asked to write title, META, and heading material bring it up to be sure that this is not your responsibility. To be honest, it is in everyone’s best interest to have you do this, but that’s another story. With the software on the market to optimize a site, you may not be asked to do the research.

All right, now look at the data you’ve gained. You have met with the client, seen the business, talked with employees, determined what kind of a business they are, how they see themselves, and their customers. You have worked out Joe Customer and know the demographics of the client’s customers. You have made friends and shown the client that you are a top flight professional with the ability, brains, skills, and background to do a masterful job with their needs.

So what's next? Start to write, but write for the Web, not for print; and write for the reader, the person who pays for the services or goods, the user. You do not write for the client, the client's sales force, the client's engineers, or for the Webmaster. Only for the user.

On the Web, you write tight. The fewer words you use the better. Less is more in every sense of the word. However, you should use as many words you need to get the message across. We are not saying to dumb down the message. We are saying to write tight; no fluff. You've likely heard that before and I'm sorry to say that you will likely hear it again because it is that important. If you are new to Web writing you have a new skill to master. If you are used to writing or editing theses for PhD students, culture shock is going to come your way. If you have written radio commercials, you're fine. Compared to writing a 15- or 30-second spot for radio, the Web is a breeze. It is all relative to what you are used to. We have included examples that include writing driving directions, how to take something apart and put it back together again, and how to write for those occasions where people could be killed if they don't understand the message.

## ***Fluff Is Not Content***

Fluff is not content. Fluff is junk taking up space. It is far better for the client to have a little high-quality content than page after page of fluff. No one is going to read the fluff, even if you think it is serving the purpose of bringing additional users to your site. While some people are more comfortable when their Web site is packed with information, they need to evaluate the quality of the information and just how many users are accessing it. This is easily done by using the diagnostic programs that accompany your Web site or asking your Web master for a report.

## ***12 tips to make your Web site pull its weight***

### **1. Treat your Web site like an employee**

Your Web site has a job to do and, as mentioned previously, you should treat it as you would any other employee whose job is sales, marketing, and advertising. To be effective, your Web site needs measurable goals that you can use to determine its effectiveness. To simply throw material on the Web with no clear-cut idea of what the information is supposed to accomplish is a waste of your money and resources. Ask customers how they found your site. Search for your site yourself, in all major search engines. Can you find it?

Review the statistics on the visitors who access your site. How many “hits” per day do you get? How long do they stay? What pages of your site are most popular? This information is invaluable and costs you nothing because your Web statistics contain it.

### 2. Make your Web site a resource for your customers

This will keep your customers visiting again and again. What to include? Let your customer needs be your guide. Do they need product specifications, current costs, currency conversion, instructions to set up or troubleshoot complex devices or software? Position yourself as the go-to site for high-quality information, data, and assistance when your customers have problems. This reputation is priceless, and will be reflected in customer loyalty. There is an old saying: “A friend in need, is a friend indeed.” When you help someone out of a jam, you make a friend.

### 3. Tell them what you can do for them

Many people make the mistake of telling the reader what they do, rather than telling the reader what they can do for the reader. There is a critical distinction there, because we all listen to that most important FM station: WIIFM, What’s In It For Me. Make clear what you can do for the user. On every major page of your site, list your business name, address, and telephone number, link to your Contact Us page, or include an e-mail link. Every page must be able to stand alone in this regard, because you have no control over what page a user will access when entering your site.

Don’t tell people you are a carpenter; tell them that you build homes. Don’t say you are a handyman; tell them you will rebuild a bathroom, or a kitchen. Tell people what you can do for them.

### 4. Include an About Us page and customer testimonials

Here is your chance to tell a prospective customer or client about the company, its senior staff, how long it has been in business, where you are located, and other pertinent material that is important, but does not fit elsewhere on your site. Take care with the style of writing here—not too formal, not too friendly. If you are a high technology firm, a short bio of the senior staff may be called for; if you are an online seller of shoes, that may not be important. Whatever you do, this is the place to tell the world about yourself.

Always include testimonials from your customers, because they show that others have successfully done business with you. Put your testimonials on a

separate page and link to it, or put a short testimonial at the top of your main page. Include the name of the person and his or her company or organization. A testimonial like this:

“Great job.”

J. Customer, Connecticut

is never as effective as:

“Great service, timely shipping, knowledgeable people.”

Janet Customer  
Marketing Director  
Company Name

The difference is striking. While the first could be from anyone, almost anywhere, the second is from a particular person at an acknowledged company. People aren't stupid; testimonials like the first one border on being bogus. Don't use them.

## **5. Engage in e-mail marketing**

E-mail marketing can be very effective, especially when contacting existing customers.

Ask for an e-mail address when you do business and send notices of sales and special discounts, but be careful that your sales are not periodic, else your customer will simply wait for your next sale. Rather, tie a sale to a one-time event such as a 10-year anniversary sale or other such event that customers won't simply wait for.

If you run a service business and find that contacting your customers is a problem because they are not home when you call, consider using e-mail. It is far more productive than having an employee leave messages on answering machines. Your Web site likely has many e-mail addresses. Use one for each town you work in, or one for each product. This is very cost effective and will simplify your record-keeping and allow you to more easily schedule your services.

## **6. Publish a newsletter**

Give your customers industry news, what's new, products that are coming soon, and what they need to know to use your products better, or for purposes that are not obvious. Str the money-saving aspects and versatility. Keep your newsletter to no more than two pages. Link to more extensive news or events.

Use your e-mail program to make a mailing list that contains the e-mail addresses of all your customers. When you send the newsletter, paste the list into the bcc (blind carbon copy) line and your customers will not see the entire list when they open their mail.

### 7. Research and determine who your reader will be

Write to that educational or skill level. You may find that your user is very competent and highly experienced in the field. If so, write to an expert level of competence. Should your users be children or teens, use short paragraphs and make your point quickly. This is especially important when writing sales material or when, for example, you need to show the benefits of a new electronic product. Don't hesitate to write one-sentence paragraphs when your users are young people. The rule that says no one-sentence paragraphs was made to be broken.

And this is the perfect situation to break it. Let the needs for clarity dictate how you structure your words. Should you be selling life insurance, answer all questions fully and completely. In this case, your target user wants in-depth information. That is also true when placing highly technical information online for engineers, technicians, mechanics, and others who need to access specific data quickly.

When you need to accommodate users with differing levels of expertise, include a table of contents that shows what is appropriate for a novice and what is for advanced users. A table of contents is invaluable when dealing with complex information, machines, or situations where detail is important. In this way, those in need of specific data can get it quickly. Sites that offer this ability are invaluable and will be remembered, talked about, and linked to. Detail on your Website also makes it more credible.

### 8. Submit your Web site address to search engines

Submit your Web site's address to Google, Yahoo, AltaVista, and any other search engine, directory, or specialty search engine relevant to your business. To find them search for "search engines" in Google or Yahoo.

For international search engines visit *[www.searchenginecolossus.com](http://www.searchenginecolossus.com)* to find search engines for 351 countries and territories. This is invaluable if you do business internationally.

When was the last time you tried to find your site in any major search engine? Try it sometime; you may be very surprised at the results you get, or don't get.



## **9. Make your site easy to navigate**

Use consistent navigation links on every major page of your Web site. Be sure that their color, placement, and order are identical from page to page. This is critical to ease of use and user retention, because users like consistency. No user should ever get lost and have no way to return to your main page. People will simply leave your site and go elsewhere. All links must take the user to where they say they will. To intentionally mislabel a link smacks of deception and destroys your credibility. Do not mislead or misrepresent the destination of a link.

## **10. Install site search capability**

Nothing is easier for your customers to use than a site search box. This is used by every major e-commerce site out there. You can use this capability by installing site search capability on your opening page. A search box is a demonstrated asset to any business site, especially when many products, or a great deal of information is presented.

There are many ways to do this. They range from using a major search engine like Google to do the search to installing your own search facility on your Web site. If you use Google, or another external search engine, be aware that the material searched for must have been scanned by Google before it will appear in the search results. So, if you are updating your Web site routinely, this is not a good option because it can be some time before Google re-scans your site. In that case, you are better off with your own search capability because your Web master can simply keep it up to date.

For an excellent search engine you can add to your site see *www.xav.com*, Fluid Dynamics Software Corporation and their Fluid Dynamics Search Engine. We like this product. It does a great job and is easily re-indexed, so important to do after you update the site. This product was recommended to me by Rob Miller at Host Cabin, *www.hostcabin.com*. Rob provides superior customer and technical support.

## **11. Write for the Web, not for print**

Writing for the Web is not like writing for print. People do not read the Web; they scan it looking for pertinent information and specific facts. While people are comfortable reading print in a word-for-word manner, they do not read the Web that way.

Write tight. Use no more words than what are needed. Use no more sentences than required. Users do not want to read fluff, marketing hype, or a sales pitch that you've embedded in valuable information. In fact, users resent it—they resent it a great deal. Don't do it. Make your words all meat and potatoes—solid, easily read and understood, and to the point.

Use simple words; express yourself in simple words that get the message across. Don't dumb down the material. What we are saying is that your intended user must never be forced to look up words to understand what you are writing about. If users can't understand your content they will go elsewhere. We realize that not all content can be understood by everyone. Content must be understood by its intended user for it to accomplish its intended mission. Without a mission, it's fluff. Get rid of it.

### **12. Advertise your site and business with a media release**

Getting the word out that you exist, where you are, and what you sell is critical to your success. Make it a habit to send a media release at least two or three times per year. Sending one quarterly is even better. Always find a tie-in to local, state, or national news and remember that the target of your media release is the media, not your customers. Never expect a thinly disguised advertisement to be picked up as news. It won't.